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THE ROLE OF CITY GOVERNMENT IN
BOSTON AND THE NATION'S THIRTY LARGEST CITIES:
A COMPARATIVE VIEW

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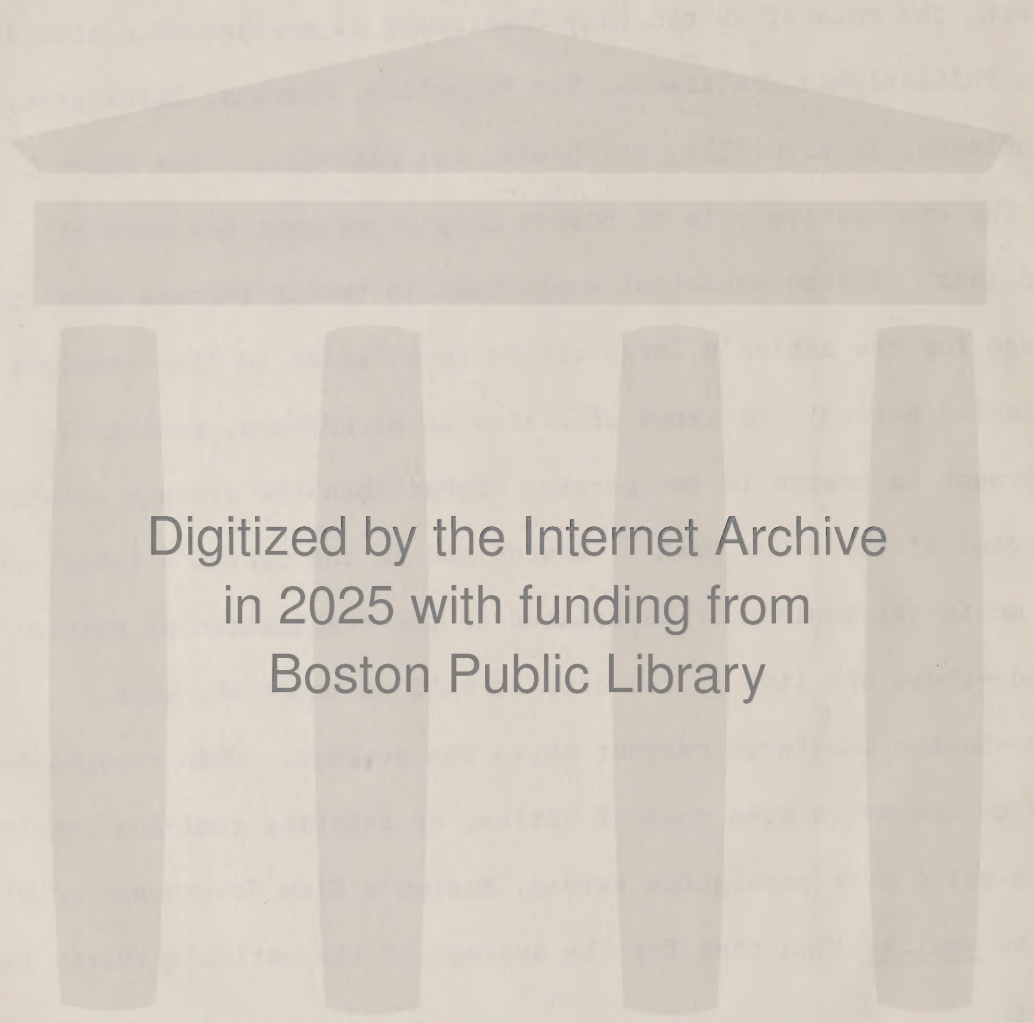
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Characterizations of Boston as a high spender are frequently based on improper comparisons with other large cities. When more appropriate comparisons are made, Boston's municipal government role is seen as only moderately larger than that of the average of the nation's large cities. In fact, the role of Boston City Government is smaller than that in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, San Francisco, Memphis, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, Jacksonville, St. Louis, and Nashville. See Chart 1.

The comparative role of Boston City Government has several dimensions. Boston municipal employment is twenty percent above the average for the nation's large cities in relation to city resident population served. In terms of cities as workplaces, municipal employment in Boston is two percent higher than the average relative to the total of those who work in Boston and in the nation's large cities. When municipal employment is related to the combination of people served--those who live in the city as well as those who work there--Boston is eleven percent above the average. When recognition is given to the metro area role of cities, by relating municipal employment to the metro area population served, Boston's City Government role is seen as smaller than that for the average of the nation's thirty largest cities.

A recent article by a prominent Boston journalist illustrates the problem of improper comparisons. Warren Brookes, columnist for the Boston Herald American, known for his well-researched and pithy critiques, noted in an article, published June 16th, 1981, that Boston has "one of the largest city bureaucracies per 10,000 population in the country.....The Census Bureau shows that Boston spends on comparable

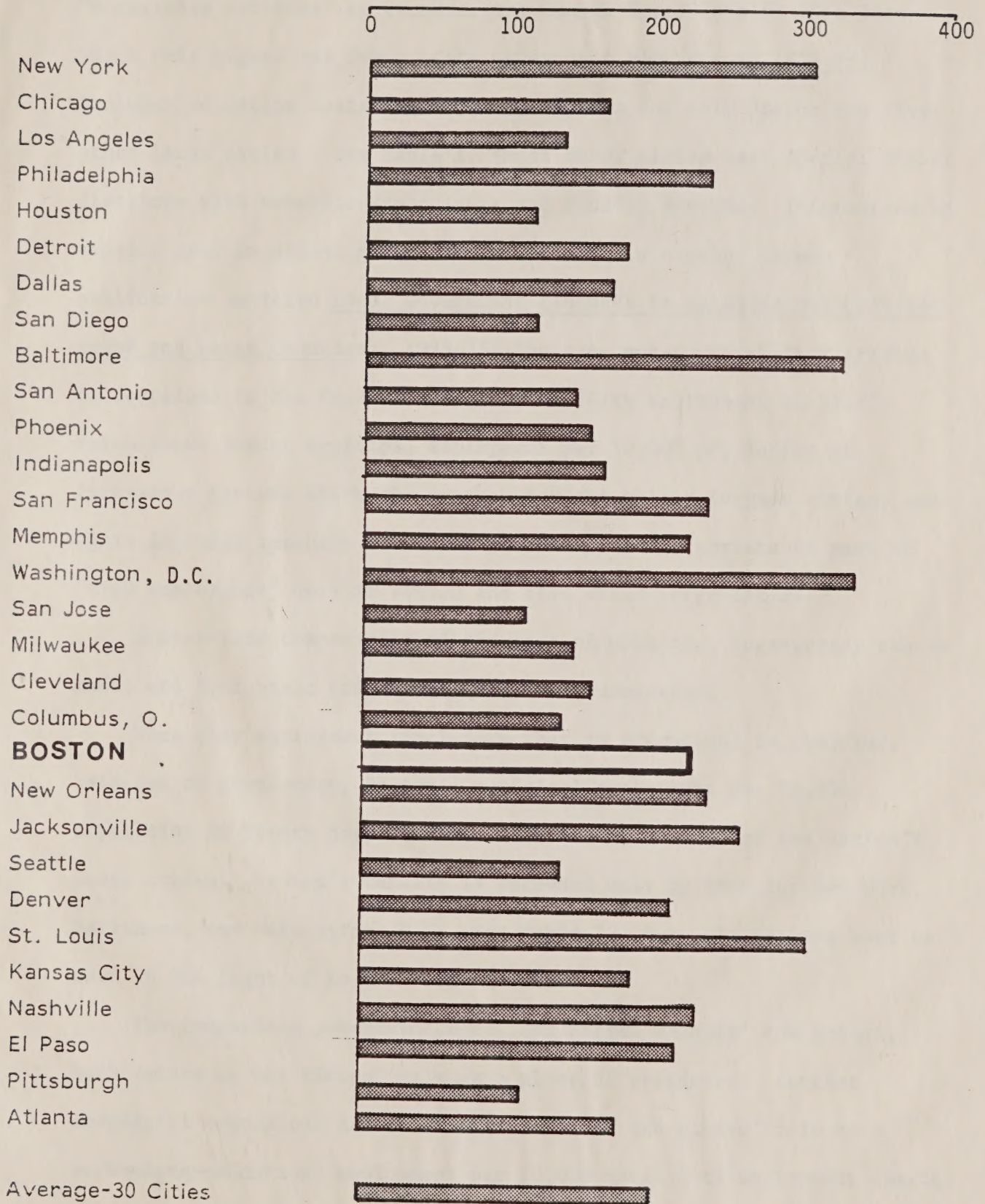


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CHART 1

CITY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT PER 10,000 OF
COMBINED CITY POPULATION AND TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



services about seventy percent more than the U.S. urban average for the thirty largest cities". But, contrary to the use of the term "comparable services" by Brookes, the Census Bureau publication from which this figure was drawn, City Government Finances in 1978-79, includes education costs as city expenditures for only Boston and five other large cities. See Table 1. (Most other cities have special school districts with separate expenditure and funding systems. Information on expenditures in school districts is included in another Census publication entitled Local Government Finances in Selected Metropolitan Areas and Large Counties: 1978-79). The same non-comparability problem is contained in the Census Bureau report "City Employment in 1979", which shows Boston municipal employment per 10,000 population at fifty-four percent above the average for the thirty largest cities, and again includes teachers and other public education workers as part of "city employment" only in Boston and five other large cities.

Appropriate comparisons of the size of municipal bureaucracy can be made, and four basic comparisons are here summarized.

When city employment (including that in education) is compared, relative to population, Boston's municipal employment per 10,000 population is twenty percent above that of the average of the nation's large cities. Boston's ranking is exceeded only by that for New York, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. See Table 2. But this ranking must be seen in the light of Boston's other roles.

The comparison presented above, and Warren Brookes' comparison, both relate to the cities' role as a place of residence. Another meaningful comparison can be made in terms of the cities' role as a work-place--municipal employment per 10,000 total city employment (again

including municipal education workers for all cities). In such a comparison, Boston ranks thirteenth out of thirty large cities and its level is two percent above the average. See Table 3.

A third comparison would be to relate municipal employment (including workers in education) to cities' roles as places to live and places to work. When municipal employment is measured per 10,000 city population and total city employment, Boston ranks eleventh and is eleven percent above the average for the nation's large cities. See Table 4.

A fourth comparison would take into account Boston's role and that of other cities, in serving a metro area population. On the average, the nation's thirty largest cities make up two-thirds of their metro area population, in contrast to one-fifth in the case of Boston. This means that, relative to population size, Boston provides more services to the metro area. This is well documented. Boston has as many jobs as people, with suburban commuters making up sixty percent of the work force, all of whom rely on city services and facilities. Two-thirds of the patients admitted to tax-exempt hospitals in Boston are not city residents. Almost all of the students enrolled in tax-exempt institutions of higher education are not graduates of Boston's schools. A proper comparison to accommodate this circumstance, is municipal employment per 100,000 metro area population. In such a comparison (including municipal education workers for all cities) Boston's municipal employment, relative to metro area population, is less than the average for the nation's thirty cities. See Table 2.

Table 1

PER CAPITA MUNICIPAL EXPENDITURES, AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT
 PER 10,000 POPULATION, FOR THE THIRTY LARGEST CITIES
 Census Bureau Information
 (Unadjusted for Non-Inclusion of Education for 24 Cities,
 As Used by Warren Brookes)

	Per Capita Municipal Expenditures, 1978-79		Municipal Employment Per 10,000 Population, 1979	
	<u>Total City Government</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Total City Government</u>	<u>Education</u>
1. New York	\$1,639	\$380	446	138
2. Chicago	426	10	155	0
3. Los Angeles	396	10	146	0
4. Philadelphia	792	21	196	0
5. Houston	349	0	101	0
6. Detroit	767	13	193	0
7. Dallas	410	0	163	0
8. San Diego	299	11	86	0
9. Baltimore	1,169	372	521	225
10. San Antonio	298	3	149	0
11. Phoenix	469	7	123	0
12. Indianapolis	501	7	160	0
13. San Francisco	1,227	30	324	0
14. Memphis	617	262	359	157
15. Washington, DC	2,692	524	644	196
16. San Jose	425	0	137	0
17. Milwaukee	292	0	66	0
18. Cleveland	613	13	186	0
19. Columbus, Ohio	522	0	130	0
20. BOSTON	1,450	413	397	144
21. New Orleans	548	1	223	0
22. Jacksonville	459	1	207	0
23. Seattle	500	7	180	0
24. Denver	870	0	263	0
25. St. Louis	624	10	269	0
26. Kansas City	585	31	149	0
27. Nashville	810	304	404	172
28. El Paso	270	0	107	0
29. Pittsburgh	425	0	130	0
30. Atlanta	854	10	208	0
AVERAGE	\$860		258	
Boston in Relation to Average	+69%		+54%	

Table 1 (continued)

Sources:

- Column 1: Total city expenditures for each city divided by total city population. Municipal expenditures are from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, City Government Finances in 1978-79, Table 5, September 1980. GF79 No. 4. Population is from Census Bureau estimate for 1977, as shown in Table 5.
- Column 2: Total city education expenditures divided by total city population. Same sources as for Column 1.
- Column 3: Total city government employment divided by total city population times 10,000. Municipal government employment is from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, City Employment in 1979, Table 4, June 1980, GF79 No. 2. Population is from same source as Column 1.
- Column 4: Total city education employment divided by total city population times 10,000. Same sources as for Column 3.

Compiled by BRA Research Department, July 10, 1981.

Table 2

CITY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC EDUCATION) IN RELATION TO
CITY AND METROPOLITAN AREA POPULATION FOR THE THIRTY LARGEST CITIES, 1979*

	City Government Employment 1979	City Population 1980 [#]	Metropolitan Area Population 1980 [#]	City Government Employment Per 10,000 City Population	Per 100,000 Metro Area Population
New York	325,391	7,071,030	9,060,000	460	3,592
Chicago	94,888	3,005,061	7,032,000	316	1,349
Los Angeles	93,287	2,966,763	7,441,000	314	1,254
Philadelphia	59,979	1,688,210	4,696,000	355	1,277
Houston	34,750	1,594,086	2,887,000	218	1,204
Detroit	44,024	1,203,339	4,342,000	366	1,014
Dallas	31,842	904,078	2,961,000	352	1,075
San Diego	20,187	875,504	1,858,000	231	1,087
Baltimore	41,900	786,775	2,164,000	533	1,936
San Antonio	17,398	785,410	1,065,000	222	1,634
Phoenix	22,772	764,911	1,505,000	298	1,513
Indianapolis	19,699	700,807	1,158,000	281	1,701
San Francisco	29,515	678,974	3,221,000	435	916
Memphis	23,999	646,356	910,000	371	2,637
Washington, DC	44,104	637,651	3,042,000	692	1,450
San Jose	14,852	636,550	1,283,000	233	1,158
Milwaukee	17,865	636,212	1,390,000	281	1,285
Cleveland	22,559	573,822	1,893,000	393	1,192
Columbus, Ohio	14,303	564,871	1,085,000	253	1,318
BOSTON	24,995	562,994	2,763,000	444	905
New Orleans	21,596	556,913	1,181,000	388	1,829
Jacksonville	21,658	541,269	736,000	400	2,943
Seattle	16,781	491,897	1,600,000	341	1,049
Denver	20,289	488,765	1,613,000	415	1,258
St. Louis	26,466	448,640	2,340,000	590	1,131
Kansas City	14,686	446,562	1,320,000	351	1,188
Nashville	17,342	439,599	829,000	394	2,092
El Paso	13,465	424,522	479,000	317	2,811
Pittsburgh	12,875	423,962	2,261,000	304	569
Atlanta	17,368	422,293	2,004,000	411	867
TOTAL	1,181,835	31,967,826	75,939,000	-	-

AVERAGE	39,395	1,065,594	2,531,300	370	1,556
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* For the 24 cities with separate school districts, employment in public education systems must be added to "city employment" in order to have proper comparisons with the six cities for which public education is part of city employment--Boston, New York, Baltimore, Nashville. Memphis and Washington D.C. This is done in Table 2, Column 1.

** For seven cities, employment in public education is reported on a county basis only. For these cities, education employment was estimated according to the ratio of city to county population, 1980.

Table 2 (continued)

The Census Bureau publications, City Government Employment in 1979 and Local Government Employment in Selected Metropolitan Areas and Large Counties: 1979, use 1977 population estimates to relate to employment levels. Since the time of their publication, 1980 Census population numbers have become available, and the are used in the analyses here presented.

Sources:

- Column 1: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Local Government Employment in Selected Metropolitan Areas and Large Counties, 1979, GE79 No. 3, August 1980. Includes full-time equivalent city employment plus school district employment. See Table 4. Where city was same as the county, or where city education employment was derived **, Table 2 was used. El Paso data obtained from Table 5.
- Column 2: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981, Final-Unofficial 1980 Census of Population and Housing.
- Column 3: From U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981, Preliminary, 1980 Census of Population and Housing.
- Column 4: Column 1 divided by Column 2 times 10,000.
- Column 5: Column 1 divided by Column 3 times 100,000.

Table 3

CITY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC EDUCATION) IN RELATION TO
TOTAL CITY EMPLOYMENT FOR THIRTY LARGEST CITIES, 1979

	City Government Employment 1979	Total City-County Employment 1979	City Government Employment Per 10,000 Total City Employment
1. New York	325,391	3,572,402*	911
2. Chicago	94,888	2,800,220	339
3. Los Angeles	93,287	3,963,820	235
4. Philadelphia	59,979	869,609*	690
5. Houston	34,750	1,348,927	258
6. Detroit	44,024	1,134,037	388
7. Dallas	31,842	972,847	327
8. San Diego	20,187	848,087	238
9. Baltimore	41,900	492,144*	851
10. San Antonio	17,398	437,325	398
11. Phoenix	22,772	694,881	328
12. Indianapolis	19,699	490,921	401
13. San Francisco	29,515	589,550*	501
14. Memphis	23,999	406,661	590
15. Washington, DC	44,104	669,035*	659
16. San Jose	14,852	705,397	211
17. Milwaukee	17,865	565,668	316
18. Cleveland	22,559	854,780	264
19. Columbus, Ohio	14,303	480,589	298
20. BOSTON	24,995	555,513	449
21. New Orleans	21,596	349,070*	619
22. Jacksonville	21,658	293,192	739
23. Seattle	16,781	727,424**	231
24. Denver	20,289	450,892*	450
25. St. Louis	26,466	410,141*	645
26. Kansas City	15,686	412,010**	381
27. Nashville	17,342	310,946	558
28. El Paso	13,465	192,137	701
29. Pittsburgh	12,875	736,655	175
30. Atlanta	17,368	556,243**	312
TOTAL	1,181,835	26,891,123	-
AVERAGE	39,395	896,371	440

* County and city are coterminous in the case of eight cities.

** For three cities, employment for the largest central city county was used; in no case was the population size less than 87 percent of the total population.

Table 3 (continued)

Sources: Column 1: From Table 2, Column 1.

Column 2: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, "Employment by Type and Broad Industrial Source, by State, Metro Area, and County, 1979", special computer printout, April 1981. Total employment is for the central city county except as noted. Boston's employment and population make up 96 percent and 87 percent, respectively, of that for the central city county (Suffolk). The population of the thirty largest cities comprises 46 percent of that for the central city counties. For employment, the central city concentration, relative to the central city county, is thought to be larger. In summary:

Cities which are also counties -

1. Denver
2. New Orleans
3. New York (5)
4. Philadelphia
5. San Francisco

Cities which have a special relationship with their county (where either the city undertakes traditional county functions or vice versa) -

1. Baltimore
2. Boston
3. Indianapolis
4. Jacksonville
5. Nashville-Davidson
6. St. Louis
7. Washington, DC (Also performs other federal functions)

Cities which make up parts of more than one county -

1. Seattle-Everett: King and Snohomish Counties
2. Kansas City: Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties
3. Atlanta: Fulton and DeKalb Counties

Column 3: Column 1 divided by Column 2 times 10,000

Table 4

CITY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC EDUCATION) IN RELATION TO
CITY POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT FOR THIRTY LARGEST CITIES, 1979-1980

	City Government Employment 1979	City Population 1980	Total City-County Employment 1979	City Population Plus Total City Employment 1979-1980	City Government Employment per 10,000 City Population Plus Total City Employment
1. New York	325,391	7,071,030	3,572,402	10,643,432	306
2. Chicago	94,888	3,005,061	2,800,220	5,805,281	163
3. Los Angeles	93,287	2,966,763	3,963,820	6,930,583	135
4. Philadelphia	59,979	1,688,210	869,609	2,557,819	234
5. Houston	34,750	1,594,086	1,348,927	2,943,013	118
6. Detroit	44,024	1,203,339	1,134,037	2,337,376	188
7. Dallas	31,842	904,078	972,847	1,876,925	170
8. San Diego	20,187	875,504	848,087	1,723,591	117
9. Baltimore	41,900	786,775	492,144	1,278,919	328
10. San Antonio	17,398	785,410	437,325	1,222,735	142
11. Phoenix	22,772	764,911	694,881	1,459,792	156
12. Indianapolis	19,699	700,807	490,921	1,191,728	164
13. San Francisco	29,515	678,974	589,550	1,268,524	233
14. Memphis	23,999	646,356	406,661	1,053,017	228
15. Washington, DC	44,104	637,651	669,035	1,306,686	338
16. San Jose	14,852	636,550	705,397	1,341,947	111
17. Milwaukee	17,865	636,212	565,668	1,201,880	149
18. Cleveland	22,559	573,822	854,780	1,428,602	158
19. Columbus, Ohio	14,303	564,871	480,589	1,045,460	137
20. BOSTON	24,995	562,994	555,513	1,118,507	223
21. New Orleans	21,596	556,913	349,070	905,983	238
22. Jacksonville	21,658	541,269	293,192	834,461	260
23. Seattle	16,781	491,897	727,424	1,219,331	138
24. Denver	20,289	488,765	450,892	939,657	216
25. St. Louis	26,466	448,640	410,141	858,781	308
26. Kansas City	15,686	446,562	412,010	858,572	183
27. Nashville	17,342	439,599	310,946	750,545	231
28. El Paso	13,465	424,522	192,137	616,659	218
29. Pittsburgh	12,875	423,962	736,655	1,160,617	111
30. Atlanta	17,368	422,293	556,243	978,536	177
TOTAL	1,181,835	31,967,826	26,891,123	58,858,949	-
AVERAGE	39,395	1,065,594	896,371	1,961,965	201

Sources: Column 1 - From Table 2, Column 1
 Column 2 - From Table 2, Column 2
 Column 3 - From Table 3, Column 2
 Column 4 - Column 2 plus Column 3
 Column 5 - Column 1 divided by Column 4 times 10,000

